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THE BOOK OF SAINTS AND FRIENDLY BEASTS. By ABBIE FARWELL BROWN. Illustrated by Fanny Y. Cory. Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. 1901. Pp. 225.

This little book contains a series of tales relating to certain saints and their attendant animals, told in the simplest and most charming manner. The reader will not find a herbarium, in which desiccated elements of folklore are preserved for the consultation of an expert; the old stem is made to put forth leaf and blossom in a manner to attract and touch the taste and sensibilities of the public for which it is intended. The last of the narratives relates to Saint Francis, and the spirit of the whole collection is not unlike that of the saint. The material furnished by mediæval legends is sufficient to supply several such works; throughout these breathes a feeling for animal life, not at the time so completely separated from human existence as to-day is the case. It may be thought that the narrator would have done well to treat of well-known holy personages whose names she omits; for example, Ste. Genevieve and her doe might well have been accepted. As it is, a considerable number of the saints introduced are obscure characters, chiefly Celtic, scarce known to *Acta Sanctorum*. In some cases their legends are rather the creation of literary activity than the exact presentation of popular belief. But the themes are sufficiently ancient; and the writer did not intend that the stories should of necessity be mediæval in detail.

In regard to the tale which occupies the first place, we are obliged to take some exception. This is entitled "Saint Bridget and the King's Wolf." It is related that a certain king of Ireland had a tame wolf, which is shot by a countryman, who does not observe that the beast carries the royal mark. The man goes to court in order to claim the reward promised to destroyers of wolves, but instead of recompense is sentenced to die. Bridget, who knows the condemned person, pities his fate, and goes to the king in order to beg his life; a white wolf jumps into her chariot, is taken to the king, and accepted as a substitute. From what immediate source the author has taken this tale we do not know; but in the mediæval narrative which served as the ultimate source the beast is not a wolf, but a tame fox, on account of his sagacity a favorite with the king. The fox is killed by a peasant; but the king swears to annihilate the slayer and all his race, unless he can produce a fox as clever as that which he has removed. Bridget prays to God, who sends her, as the account naïvely observes, one of his own wild foxes (*unam de suis vulpibus feris*). As Bridget is riding in her car, the fox takes his seat beside her, and, when he gets to the palace, goes through a series of tricks for the benefit of the king. The performer gives satisfaction, is admitted to the privileges of his predecessor, and the criminal forgiven. On the following day the fox furnishes a still more striking indication of ability by running away, and getting off safely to his hole, in spite of the most active pursuit on the part of dogs and hunters. The more authentic form of the history to our mind appears also the more agreeable; and, pleasing as is the figure of the white wolf, whom Bridget is represented as caressing, we would rather have seen the

fox blinking from the front seat of the jaunting car, where he had perched himself beside the maiden.

W. W. Newell.

BLUEBEARD. A contribution to history and folk-lore, being the history of Gilles de Retz, of Brittany, France, who was executed at Nantes in 1440 A. D., and who was the original of Bluebeard in the tales of Mother Goose. By THOMAS WILSON, LL. D., Curator, Division of Prehistoric Archæology, U. S. National Museum, etc. Illustrated. New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons. Pp. xv, 212.

The work of Professor Wilson, which we are late in noticing, is essentially an account of the career of Gilles de Retz, Marshal of France, condemned on charges of heresy and the abduction of children. Gilles was fond of magnificence, and his extravagance caused presumptive heirs to make an attempt to deprive him of the management of his property. In 1440 the Bishop of Nantes cited Gilles to appear before his court on accusation of unspeakable crimes against infants, and a decree of excommunication was passed upon him. This decree profoundly affected the accused, who seems to have been a devout believer, more anxious for the safety of his soul than for that of his body. At the trial accusations of heresy and magic were added; the defendant was alleged to have a familiar spirit, who had appeared to him within a magic circle, in the form of a serpent or a leopard, and such acts of incantation Gilles admitted. He was convicted of heresy, but, in consideration of his submission, the excommunication was annulled.

Professor Wilson agrees with other historians in considering that Gilles was guilty; but a good case could be made out in his defence. The assumed acts belong to folk-superstition; the mediæval process made it easy to enforce confession by torture, and the fears of the accused for the future fate of his soul inclined him to subservience; the evidence is suspicious, and in a modern court would carry little weight. It is a curious piece of folk-lore that the altar erected to the memory of Gilles, an alleged murderer of infants, came to be popularly considered as that of The Blessed Virgin who Makes Milk (*Bonne Vierge de Créé-Lait*). Nursing mothers worshipped at this shrine.

That Perrault's tale of Bluebeard is founded on the career of Gilles de Retz is assumed by the author; but this supposition scarce appears to have foundation. A number of variants appear in Europe. These, with related stories, have been ably discussed by Mr. E. Sidney Hartland, in the "*Folk-Lore Journal*" for 1885 (iii. 192-242). His conclusion is that the narrations belonging to the category of "*The Forbidden Chamber*" developed from an account of "the slaughter of his wife and children by a capricious or cannibal husband, to marriage and murder for previously incurred vengeance, or for purposes of witchcraft, and thence to murder by a husband for disobedience express or implied." At this point the killing is represented as a punishment for fatal curiosity. It may here be remarked that another reason for the destruction of a pregnant wife is to